

Mental Health

Stress management, mindfulness, self-acceptance

The Results of the Life Balance Masters Training

2024-3-HU01-KA210-YOU-000290582



Why is mental health

Mental health is just as important as physical health, yet it is often neglected. The toolkit aims to provide practical help in maintaining everyday mental well-being.



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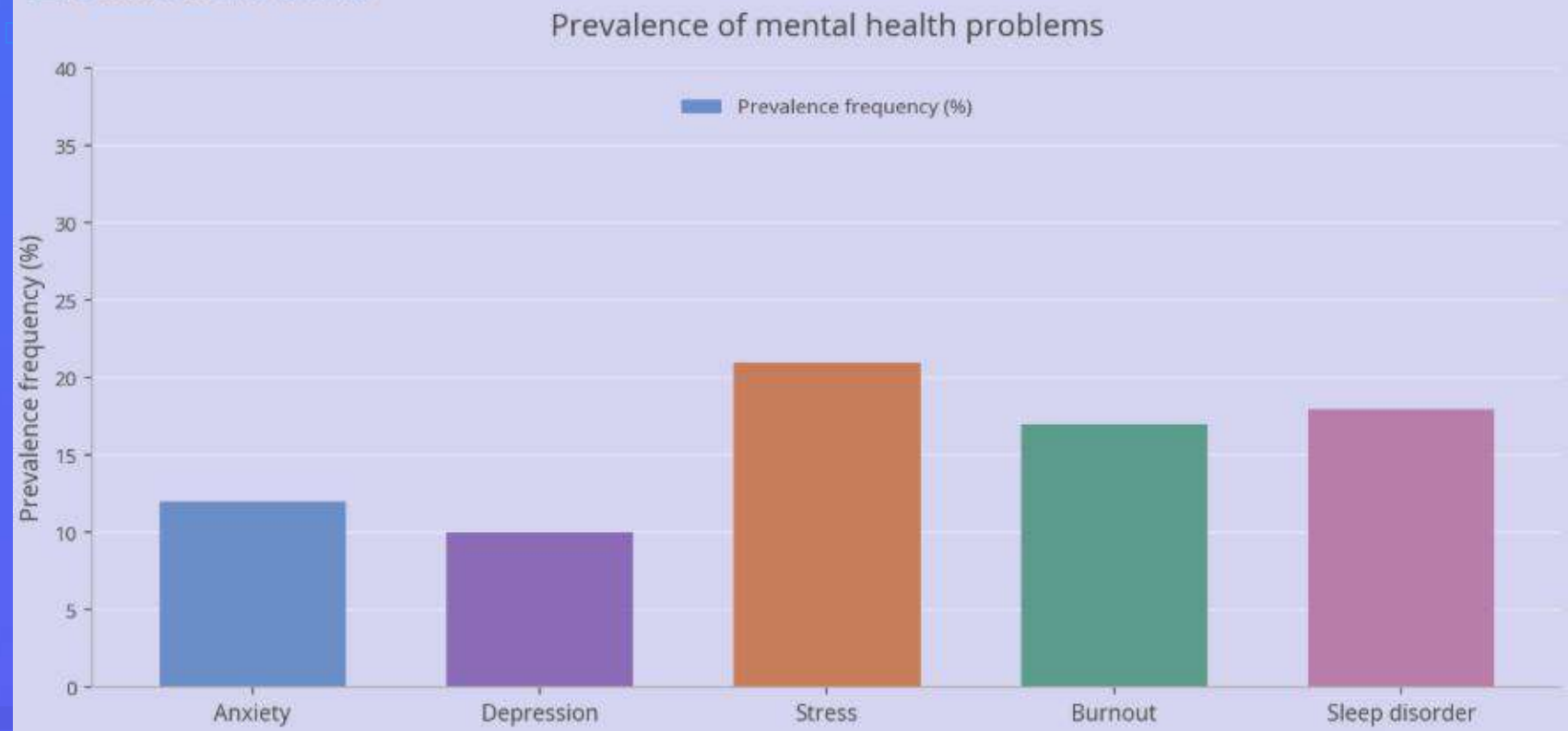
One in four people will experience mental health problems during their lifetime

□ Definition of mental health

Mental health is a state of **psychological, emotional and social well-being** in which an individual is able to:

- ◆ Coping with normal stressful situations in life Working productively and contributing to the community
- ◆ Recognising one's own abilities and limitations
- ◆ Responding emotionally flexibly to change

□ Statistics and trends



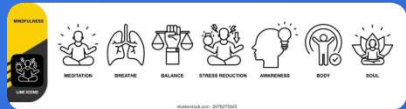
Purpose of prevention and toolkit

Mental health problems **can be prevented** and treated with the right tools. The purpose of the toolkit:

- To learn stress management techniques Incorporating mindfulness practices
- Strengthening self-acceptance and self-confidence Developing supportive habits

Stress management Basics

Stress is a natural part of life, but excessive or chronic stress can have a detrimental effect on our mental and physical health. Stress management techniques can help us find balance.



Healthy stress

Harmful stress

4-7-8 Breathing Technique

Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, then exhale for 8 seconds



The nature and effects of stress

- Stress is the body's natural response to challenges or threats
- Physical symptoms: heart palpitations, muscle tension, headaches, sleep disturbances
- Emotional symptoms: anxiety, irritability, difficulty concentrating
- Long-term effects: weakened immune system, chronic illnesses



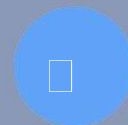
Healthy vs. harmful stress

Healthy stress (eustress)

- Short-term, motivating effect
- Enhances performance
- Helps overcome challenges
- Increases alertness

Harmful stress (distress)

- Long-term, exhausting
- Reduces performance
- Causes health problems
- Leads to emotional exhaustion



Recognising stress and immediate stress relief

Recognition techniques

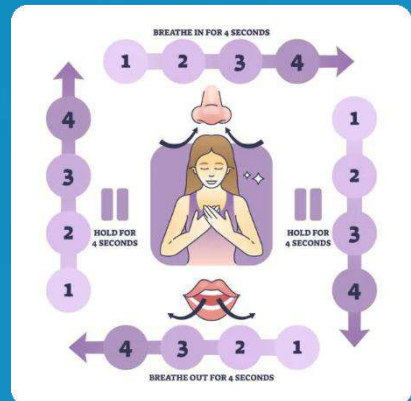
- Observing physical signs
- Awareness of emotional state
- Stress journaling
- Identifying triggers

Immediate stress relief methods

- Deep breathing exercises
- 5-4-3-2-1 awareness technique
- Short physical exercise or stretching
- Practising mindful presence

Breathing techniques and relaxation

Conscious breathing and relaxation techniques are effective tools for reducing stress and achieving mental balance. These exercises can be done anywhere, anytime can be performed.



Follow the circle with your breathing

Mindful breathing helps calm the mind and reduce stress. Here are some effective techniques:

<p>1</p> <p>4-7-8 breathing: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, exhale for 8 seconds</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Square breathing: Inhale and exhale for equal lengths of time, holding your breath</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Alternate nostril breathing: Breathing through alternating nostrils</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Abdominal breathing: The abdomen expands when inhaling and contracts when exhaling</p>
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Progressive muscle relaxation

During progressive muscle relaxation, muscle groups are first tensed and then relaxed, thus learning to recognise the difference between tension and relaxation.

<p>1</p> <p>Get into a comfortable position, close your eyes</p>	<p>2</p> <p>Tense a muscle group for 5-10 seconds</p>	<p>3</p> <p>Suddenly release the tension and notice how you relax</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Move through your body from your feet to your head</p>
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⚡ Quick relaxation techniques

- ◆ 5-5-5 breathing: inhale for 5 seconds, hold for 5 seconds, exhale for 5 seconds
- ◆ Shrug your shoulders up and down 3 times
- ◆ Consciously relax your facial muscles
- ◆ 10-second mini-meditation

📦 Visualisation techniques

- ◆ Imagine a safe place
- ◆ Visualising tension leaving the body
- ◆ Visualising soothing colours
- ◆ Visualising natural scenes

Incorporating into daily routine

- Morning: 5 minutes breathing exercises after waking up
- Mid-morning: Short breaks between
- Work: After lunch: 10 minutes of conscious rest
- Evening: Progressive relaxation before bed

Mindfulness and Conscious Presence

Mindfulness is the ability to be consciously aware of the present moment, without judgement. It helps reduce stress, improves concentration and increases emotional balance.



5-minute mindfulness exercise

- 1 Sit comfortably with your back straight
- 2 Pay attention to your breathing, do not try to control it
- 3 If your attention wanders, gently bring it back
- 4 Observe your thoughts without judgement
- 5 End the exercise with a few deep breaths

The concept and benefits of mindfulness

Mindfulness is a way of directing attention: conscious presence in the present moment, with openness and without judgement.

● Reduces stress and anxiety

● Improves concentration

● Increases emotional intelligence

● Improves sleep quality

□ Mindful eating and exercise

• Mindful eating

- Observe your food with all your senses
- Chew slowly and thoroughly Notice the flavours and textures
- Feel your body's signals (hunger, fullness)

• Mindful movement

- Pay attention to your body's sensations while moving
- Practise yoga, tai chi or chi kung
- Pay attention to each step while walking
- Feel your body and breathing harmony

Basic mindfulness exercises

□ **Breath awareness:** Observing **your** breath as air flows in and out

□ **Body scan:** Systematic attention

Control over different parts of the body

□ **Sensory awareness:** Focusing on a single sense (e.g. sounds)

□ **Mindfulness:** Observing thoughts without judging them

Mindfulness in everyday life

□ **Morning routine:** Start the day with 5 minutes of mindful presence

□ **Daily activities:** Perform routine tasks with full attention

□ **Mindful communication:** Pay full attention to the person you are talking to

□ **Conscious breaks:** Incorporate short moments of mindfulness breaks into your day

Emotional regulation

Emotional regulation is the ability to recognise, understand and manage our emotions appropriately. This is essential for mental health



♥ Recognising and accepting emotions

Recognising and accepting emotions is the basis of emotional intelligence. It helps us understand our own reactions and the behaviour of others.

□ **Emotional awareness:** Observe how experiences emotions in different situations

Body sensations: Recognise how emotions manifest themselves in your body

Emotional diary: Keep a diary of your emotions and their causes

Acceptance: All emotions are natural, there are no “good” or “bad” emotions

□ Developing emotional intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a developable skill that helps us manage our emotions and social relationships.

Self-awareness development

Practising empathy

Practising assertiveness communication

Conflict management



Dealing with negative thoughts

Thought traps

- Black-and-white thinking
- Overgeneralisation
- Catastrophising
- Labelling

Management strategies

- Questioning thoughts
- Looking for evidence
- Alternative explanations
- Thought-stopping technique

☀ Developing a positive mindset

- **Practising gratitude:** Write down three things every day you are grateful for
- **Positive affirmations:** Develop supportive internal dialogue
- **Celebrating successes:** Recognise and celebrate even small successes
- **Future-oriented thinking:** Visualise positive outcomes

Example of reframing

“I’ll never be good at this, I’ll always fail”

„I’m still learning, and I’m improving with every attempt.”

Self-acceptance and self-confidence

Self-acceptance and self-confidence
It is essential for our mental health. These skills can be developed and help us live a more balanced and happier life.



Daily affirmations

"I am valuable just the way I am."

"I grow and learn every day."

"I deserve love and respect."

♥ The importance of self-acceptance

Self-acceptance means accepting ourselves as we are, with our strengths and weaknesses, without judgment.

- Reduces anxiety and depression
- Improves self-esteem and self-confidence
- Promotes healthier relationships
- Increases flexibility and resilience

♥ Silencing your inner critic

Your inner critic is the voice that constantly judges and criticizes you. You can learn how to silence this voice.

Recognition

- Identify negative thoughts
- Observe when they are triggered
- Write down critical thoughts

Respond

- Question your thoughts
- Speak kindly to yourself
- Practice self-compassion

↑ Self-confidence building exercises

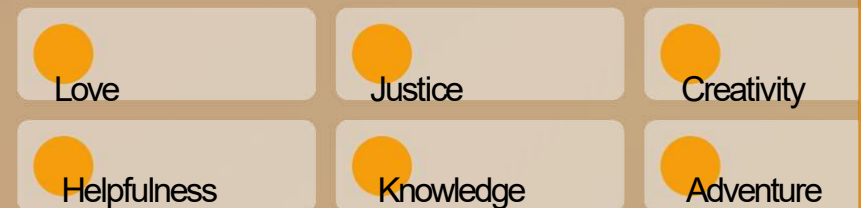
- Keep a success journal: Write down your daily successes, no matter how small
- Expand your comfort zone: Take on small challenges regularly
- Positive body language: Pay attention to your posture and body language
- Stand up for yourself: Practice assertive communication



Increased self-confidence through regular practice

✂ Identifying personal values

Identifying personal values helps us live a life that is in harmony with what is truly important to us.



Support Habit Formation

Developing supportive habits is essential for maintaining mental health.

These habits help manage stress, create emotional balance, and increase overall well-being.



Healthy daily routine



Healthy daily routines

Consistent daily routines help stabilise your mood and reduce stress.

- Morning routine:** Start your day with mindfulness and a healthy breakfast
- Work breaks:** Take regular short breaks to maintain concentration
- Eating habits:** Eat regularly and mindfully, avoid too much caffeine
- Evening wind-down:** Develop a calming evening routine for better sleep

The role of physical activity

Regular exercise improves mood, reduces stress and increases energy levels.



Cardio training



Strength training



Yoga, stretching

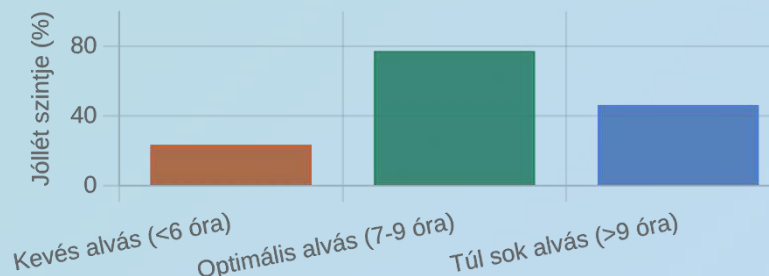


Walking, nature walks

150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity

The importance of sleep and rest

Adequate sleep and rest are essential for maintaining mental health.



- Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per day.
- Establish a regular sleep schedule

Maintaining social relationships

Strong social connections are essential for mental health.



- Keep in regular contact with friends and family members
- Join community groups or clubs
- Practice active listening and empathy Ask for support when you need it

Practical Application and Resources

Mental health tools are effective when we use them regularly in our daily lives. In this section, we summarise practical applications and provide additional resources.

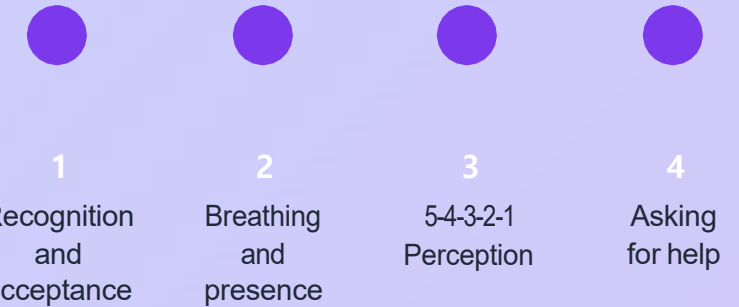


📅 Summary of daily exercises

- Performing the following exercises on a daily basis can significantly improve mental health:
- Morning: 5 minutes of mindfulness meditation and 3 breathing exercises
- During the day: 1 minute of breathing exercises and short breaks every hour
- Afternoon: 15-30 minutes of physical activity and positive reframing
- Evening: Journaling, progressive relaxation, and screen-free time

⚠️ Crisis management

In a crisis situation, it is important to intervene quickly and effectively. Follow these steps:



In case of a serious crisis, consult a professional immediately or call the helplines!

☎️ Seeking further help

When should you seek professional help?

- If symptoms persist for more than 2 weeks
- If problems interfere with daily functioning
- If self-harming thoughts or behaviors occur
- If relationships or work are significantly impaired

Available professionals: psychologist, psychiatrist, mental health professional, coach

📱 Useful applications and resources



Headspace
Guided meditation



Calm
Sleep and relaxation



Woebot
CBT chatbot



Jour
Digital diary



Happyfy
Positive psychology



Strava
Activity tracking